

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

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FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4563

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

USLO PEKING

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

C O N F I D E N T I A L NOUAKCHOTT 2196

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAID EWWT PFOR MR CH

SUBJECT: STATUS OF CHINESE FINANCED PORT FOR NOUAKCHOTT

1. THERE HAVE BEEN RUMORS FOR PAST SEVERAL MONTHS THAT ACTIVITY ON CHINESE FINANCED AND BUILT DEEP WATER PORT FOR NOUAKCHOTT WOULD SOON GET UNDERWAY. EMBASSY OFFICER WAS ABLE TO CONFIRM OCTOBER 24 THAT CHINESE HAVE ESTABLISHED OFFICE AT NOUAKCHOTT WHARF. OFFICE SERVES AS HEADQUARTERS FOR GROUP COMPLETING PORT STUDY. DURING VISIT TO WHARF, LOCAL BUSINESSMAN IN POSITION KNOW IDENTIFIED CHINESE OFFICE. SECONS LATER, HALF-DOZEN CHINESE DEBARDED FROM BUS AND WALKED TOWARDS OFFICE. ACCORDING TO THIS MAURITANIAN BUSINESMAN, IT HAS STILL NOT BEEN DETERMINED WHERE PORT WILL BE LOCATED. CHINESE ARE CONSIDERING LOCATIONS ALONG ENTIRE COAST LINE BETWEEN CAP TIMIRIS (150 KILOMETERS NORTH OF NOUAKCHOTT) AND A LOCATION JUST NORTHOF MOUTH OF SENEGL RIVER.

2. RETURNING TO NOUAKCHOTT FROM WHARF, SOURCE POINTED OUT SMALL CHINESE MARSHALLING YARD (NEAR JUNCTION OF ROSSO HIGHWAY AND ROAD TO NOUAKCHOTT WHARF) WHICH IS CONFIDENTIAL

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INTENDED TO BE USED, AT LEAST IN PART, FOR PORT PROJECT.

EMB. OFFICER OBSERVED SEVERAL CHINESE AT SITE.

3. COMMENT: IN EARLY JULY, FORMER MAURITANIAN AM-BASSADOR IN PEKING OLD US OAT SIIA FOR PORT HAD NOT YET BEEN DETERMINED ALTHOUGH MATTER WAS UNDER STUDY. IT IS, NEVERTHELESS, SOMEWHAT SURPRISING THAT THREE MONTHS LATER DECISION HAS REPORTEDLY STILL NOT BEEN MADE. (AMONG CURRENT RUMORS ON NOUAKCHOTT CIRCUIT IS ONE WHICH ASSERTS GIRM OBJECTED TO IMPORTATION OF PROPOSED LARGE NUMBER OF CHINESE LABORERS--FIGURE VARIES FROM 3,000 TO 8,000--FOR BUILDING PORT. GIRM ALLEGEDLY ASKED PRC TO SCALE DOWN NUMBER OF CHINESE LABORERS AND MAKE GREATER USE OF MAURITANIAN LABOR.) OF GREATER INTEREST, HOWEVER, IS POSSIBILITY THAT NEW DEEPWATER PORT MAY BE LOCATED AT SOME DISTANCE FROM NOUAKCHOTT. IT HAS BEEN GENERALLY ASSUMED UNTIL NOW THAT PORT WOULD BE BUILT NEAR PRESENT NOUAKCHOTT WHARF. SHOULD DECISION BE MADE TO GO FARTHER AFIELD, IT WILL BE NECESSARY TO BUILD CONNECGNG ROAD. WHILE LOCATION SOUTH OF CITY WOULD INVOLVE ONLY FEEDER R AD TO EXISTING HIGHWAY, ANY SITE TO NORTH WILL REQUIRE MAJOR HIGH-WAY PROJECT. IN ANY EVENT, WE BELIEVE THERE IS NOW COMPELLING EVIDENCE THAT CHINESE HAVE FINALLY BEGUN WORK ON DEEPWATER PORT PROJECT. WHERE TECH-NICAL FILED INVESTIGATIONS AND DETAILED ENGINEERING STUDIES WILL ULTIMATELY LEAD IS UNKNOWN--PRESUMABLY EVEN TO THE CHINESE AT THIS POINT.HANDYSIDE

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